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Approved For Release 2005/08/10 : CIA-RDP80R01443R000100060007-9

THE SOVIET BREAK WITH ISRAEL

The suddenness with which the Kremlin seized on the bombing of its legation in Tel Aviv as a pretext for breaking diplomatic relations with Israel suggests that this step had been contemplated ultimately in any event.

Prior to the break, the USSR had deliberately provoked increasingly bad relations with Israel by violently attacking Israeli leaders as tools of American imperialism. These attacks, coupled with the charges of Zionist subversion within the Soviet Union, pointed to the Kremlin's ultimately declaring Israeli representatives in Moscow persona non grata. The bombing subsequently provided the USSR with an immediate excuse for the even more drastic step.

Despite its long-standing anti-Zionist attitude, the USSR was one of the first countries to support the creation of Israel. Its primary aims were to expel the British, to promote instability in the Arab Near East and, hence, to exert greater influence in the area through the Israeli Communists. Only later, when it became evident that Israel was predominantly influenced by the West, did Moscow gradually withdraw its support. The bombing of the Soviet Legation, as well as the burning of a Russian-owned automobile and a Soviet bookshop, will provide the

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USSR with incidents to "justify" the recent intensification of anti-Zionism in the Orbit, and this attack will undoubtedly be a feature of the forthcoming UN General Assembly session.

The internal Soviet campaign of late 1948 against "homeless cosmopolitans" had anti-Semitic overtones. This suggested that the Jews, with a new homeland outside the Soviet Union, were considered even less trustworthy than other suspect minority groups. This attitude has emerged sharply in the current "vigilance" campaign, highlighted by the sensational disclosure of the "doctors' plot".

The subsequent broadening of the campaign to include jurists, scientists, economists, and individuals of various nationalities and from all strata of society, however, suggests that it is aimed at tightening security generally rather than at special minority groups. Zionists were logical targets in the drive to dramatize the need for security because of the appeal of anti-Semitism in the Orbit.

A missing element in the alleged cases of Zionist subversion in the USSR has been any link between the doctors and other Zionists within the USSR and Western intelligence centers outside. An alleged link in the past has been "revealed" in the person of Mikhoels, a prominent Jewish leader who maintained contact with the West. He died in 1948, the year in which the Israeli Legation was established in Moscow. The

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expulsion of Israeli personnel from Moscow may thus facilitate the "disclosure" that they have served since 1948 as the hitherto missing high-level link.

Judging from the unusually strong reaction to the break in Poland and Czechoslovakia, it seems likely that at least some of the Satellites will follow Moscow's lead and sever relations with Israel. According to the American Embassy in Moscow, the Israeli Minister there regarded the break as primarily due to internal measures against Jews in the Orbit.

An Orbit-wide rupture would have a further disquieting effect on over 2,500,000 Jews in the Orbit, including some 400,000 in Eastern Europe who have looked to Israeli diplomatic representatives in their countries for spiritual leadership, and who could hope through them to find some means of escape.

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The recent anti-Zionist moves inside the Orbit had aroused sharp reaction in Israel, but its leaders and its public did not wish to sever official ties with the Soviet Union. While the Soviet decision apparently did not surprise the Israelis, the Ben Gurion government and the public generally regard the incident as a serious development.

The break can be expected to affect Israel's domestic and foreign policies. Statements in the past few days by Israeli and world Zionist leaders already indicate that Israel feels more isolated than heretofore and therefore more dependent on the West. This attitude has already resulted in increased appeals for political, financial, and military support from the West, particularly the United States, and may induce Israel to insist on being included in formal defense pacts with the West.

The break will have little effect on Jewish immigration from the Orbit countries, since the number of immigrants from the Satellites had already been greatly limited, and since virtually no immigrants have come from the USSR. It is possible that fears over the fate of the Jews within the Orbit may stimulate an attempt to organize an underground movement.

The Israeli Government has already imposed sharp restrictions on the activity of Orbit diplomatic personnel in Israel and will probably extend these restrictions to domestic leftists. The government, with increased popular support, may try to diminish further the limited influence of the Communist Party and of the leftist splinter group which was recently forced out of the Mapam party.

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The limited Arab reaction to the break has been one of satisfaction, although the Soviet Union is regarded at best as "a somewhat unwelcome ally." Several Arab spokesmen have expressed the hope that other countries would follow the Soviet lead.

There is no indication that the Arab countries regard the Moscow action as primarily a gesture for their benefit, but the secretary general of the Arab League stated that they should reorient their policy and exploit the new situation. An Iraqi leader suggested that the diplomatic rupture might enable the Arabs, with the help of the Soviet and Asian blocs, to reopen the Palestine question in the United Nations.

Arab concern over the Soviet break has been expressed on two points. Alarmed by the substantial Western aid already going to Israel, the Arabs fear that Moscow's action may result in even larger amounts of economic and possibly military assistance. An Arab representative in Moscow expressed anxiety that the Soviet action might increase the number of immigrants to Israel.

